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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 000475

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/11/2018  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [ASEC](#) [MOPS](#) [IZ](#) [TU](#)  
SUBJECT: TURKEY: MILITARY ROW WITH POLITICAL OPPOSITION  
CONTINUES

REF: A. ANKARA 430  
[1](#)B. ANKARA 431

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Classified By: Political-Military Counselor Carl Siebentritt, reasons 1  
.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: The war of words between the Turkish General Staff (TGS) and Turkey's main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) over the latter's allegation that the army pulled out of northern Iraq prematurely due to U.S. pressure continues unabated. CHP vice chair Mustafa Ozyurek stated that the CHP stood by party leader Deniz Baykal's comments on the military operation. GEN Buyukanit shot back that the CHP accusations were an insult to which he was compelled to respond personally. Prime Minister Erdogan has continued to defend the military, on March 10 calling for the opposition to prove its charges "or shut up." As Erdogan prepares to visit Turkey's southeast, his defense of the military may have bought him some space in which to promote the political, economic and other measures needed to undermine the PKK's support in the region, though it may have cost him some support among Kurds. The military, however, remains opposed to a broad amnesty or any measures that appear to give special treatment to Kurds as a group. End Summary.

No Right to Call Us Traitors  
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[1](#)2. (U) Following the TGS web statement accusing the country's two main opposition leaders of doing more damage to Turkey's anti-terror campaign than the terrorists themselves (ref a), CHP deputy chair Ozyurek stated that the CHOD did not have the right to accuse the opposition parties of treason. He clarified that his party's criticism was aimed at the government, not TGS. He would have expected that the CHOD would have pulled out of the argument; the CHP would never use the Turkish military to engage in partisan politics, he protested. Ozyurek later stated that CHP leader Baykal's controversial comments had not been intended as an insult, but had sought to analyze the termination of the cross-border operation. The CHP, he stated, stood by its comments.

CHP Comments an Insult  
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¶3. (U) Speaking to journalists at the annual NATO Center for Excellence - Defense Against Terrorism (COE-DAT) conference in Ankara on March 10, GEN Buyukanit stated that the Iraq operation's success had been overshadowed by the criticism and noted that he felt sorry for the soldiers who had participated in the effort. He said that the criticism that Turkish forces were withdrawn from northern Iraq because of U.S. pressure was an insult. He took credit for personally authoring the March 4 TGS web statement, stating, "I will not allow anyone to insult the Turkish military. Those who insult the military will have to confront me."

PM: Prove It or Shut Up

¶4. (U) Prime Minister Erdogan continued his defense of the military, but sought to dampen the rhetoric. Speaking in Izmir on March 9, he challenged the opposition to prove its allegations "or shut up." "If you do not shut up, the nation will make you shut up at the ballot boxes one day," he warned. He called on the opposition not to make politics over the army and charged that the CHP had cast a shadow over a successful military operation "before our heroes returned to their barracks and took off their boots."

Comment

¶5. (C) While the Prime Minister has stated that the unseemly debate over the opposition's charges is not in the national interest, it has played right into his hands. By publicly standing by the military, he has bought some space in which to promote the political, economic, social and other measures required to win the fight against terrorism within Turkey. While the military generally agrees with much of the economic

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development measures the government is said to be considering for Turkey's southeast, it remains opposed to a broadened amnesty provision for former PKK terrorists and to social/cultural measures, such as Kurdish language education, that would appear to give Turkey's Kurds a special status.

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